



What Is an Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm?

The **aorta** is the main artery of the chest and abdomen that carries blood from the heart to other areas in the body including the legs and feet. An aneurysm occurs when you have bulging of an artery wall. An **abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA)** is the bulging or “ballooning” of the aorta in your abdominal area.

What Causes an AAA?

An AAA happens when there is a breakdown of proteins in the aortic wall. Proteins

provide structure to the aortic wall, much like poles prop up a tent or an umbrella. Weak proteins provide less structure for the aorta, which causes it to steadily expand like a balloon over time.

What Are the Symptoms of an AAA?

In most cases, AAAs do not have any major symptoms. However, some people report feeling:

- Pain in the chest, abdominal area, back, or side
- Nausea
- Significant pulsating in their abdomen
- Numbness or “coldness” and tingling in hands or feet

What Is a Ruptured Aneurysm?

When an aneurysm ruptures (bursts), it is a medical emergency. You will need surgery right away. Here are the signs and symptoms of a ruptured AAA:

- Sudden, severe, and constant pain in the abdomen or back
- Loss of consciousness or passing out
- Clammy skin
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fast heartbeat

For more information, review these related flyers:

- Lifesaving Tips About ... High Blood Pressure and PAD
- What Is Aortic Dissection (AD)?

